

line 8, change "said" to --the";

line 9, delete "step";

after line 9, insert:

B¹³ --BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS-- and

after line 25, insert:

B¹⁴ --DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS--.

Page 47, line 1, change "CLAIMS" to

--WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:--.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 13 and 15 without prejudice or disclaimer in favor of new claims 20-23 set forth below.

Please amend claims 1-12, 14 and 16-19 as shown below:

B¹⁵ 1. (Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server for use in a requirements matching system comprising at least one requirements matching [broker] server accessible by means of a communications network, said requirements matching [broker] server [having] comprising:

an input for receiving a user request message by means of said communications network, wherein a user request message [includes] comprises a specification of user

requirements and an identifier for [the sender] a response contact [of the request message and a specification of user requirements]; and

routing means for forwarding a received specification of user [request] requirements [message] to a destination determined by said routing means and accessible by means of said communications network, wherein said routing means comprise:

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a store for storing at least one routing rule for controlling said routing means, wherein a routing rule comprises a specification of requirements to be routed [supplier deliverables] and an identifier for a corresponding destination;

comparison means for comparing a specification of user requirements [contained in] conveyed by a received user request message with a specification of requirements to be routed [supplier deliverables contained] as defined in a stored routing rule and, in dependence upon the result of said comparison, identifying a corresponding destination for the forwarding of said [user request message] specification of user requirements; and

forwarding means for transmitting, by means of said communications network, a [received user request] message conveying a specification of user requirements to a destination identified by said comparison means.

2. (Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 1, wherein said routing means further include registration means arranged, on receipt of a message conveying a routing rule, to store said [message] routing rule in the store.

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3. (Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 2, wherein said registration means are further arranged to generate a message including a message routing rule and to transmit the generated message to another requirements matching [broker] server.

4. (Twice Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 1 including:

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information extraction means for extracting a predetermined type of information from a received user request message, prior to forwarding [of the received message] by the [forwarding] routing means of a specification of user requirements contained therein, and [to] for [store] storing the extracted information; and

means responsive, on receipt of a message conveying a request to supply said extracted information, to transmit to the sender of the extracted information request message [conveying the request] a message including said extracted information.

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5. (Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 4, wherein said predetermined type of information is the identifier for [the sender] a response contact of [a] the specification of user requirements conveyed by a received user request message.

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6. (Twice Amended) A requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 4, including billing means for raising a charge in respect of the sender of each request to supply extracted information.

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7. (Amended) A requirements matching system comprising a plurality of requirements matching [brokers] servers, wherein each [broker] server [being interconnected with] includes an interface to a communications network to enable communication with other [brokers] servers of the system [by means of a communications network], and wherein each [broker] server [is arranged, in use] includes routing means for [to] forwarding a specification of user requirements conveyed by a received user request message to a predetermined [network] destination selected by the [broker] routing means according to the [type] category of [a] requirements described in said specification [conveyed by the received request message], said category being [identified by the broker from] one of a predefined set of [types] categories[, and wherein each broker of said system is arranged to receive, forwarded by other brokers of said system, user request messages conveying a different predetermined type of requirements specification from said predefined set of types].

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8. (Twice Amended) A system according to claim 7, wherein each [broker] server of the system is a server [broker] comprising [having]:
an input for receiving a user request message by means of said communications network, wherein a user request message [includes] comprises a specification of user

requirements and an identifier for [the sender of the request message and a specification of user requirements] a response; and

routing means for forwarding a received specification of user [request message] requirements to a destination determined by said routing means and accessible by means of said communications network, wherein said routing means comprise:

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a store for storing at least one routing rule for controlling said routing means, wherein a routing rule comprises a specification of [supplier deliverables] requirements to be routed and an identifier for a corresponding destination;

comparison means for comparing a specification of user requirements conveyed by [contained in] a received user request message with a specification of requirements to be routed [supplier deliverables contained] as defined in a stored routing rule and, in dependence upon the result of said comparison, identifying a corresponding destination for the forwarding of said specification of user requirements [user request message]; and

forwarding means for transmitting, by means of said communications network, a [received user request] message conveying a specification of user requirements to a destination identified by said comparison means.

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9. (Twice Amended) A system according to claim 7, including at least one user access server arranged with access to at least one requirements matching server of the system, said at least one user access server having a user interface for receipt of a specification of user requirements and means for generating a user request message

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comprising the received specification of user requirements and an identifier for a response contact, and for forwarding the generated message to said at least one requirements matching server [first user access means connected to said communications network to enable a user to launch into said system of brokers a message conveying a requirements specification].

10. (Twice Amended) A system according to claim 7, including [second user access means connected to said communications network] at least one server providing a user interface to enable a user to receive, from one or more [brokers] servers of said [plurality] system of [brokers] servers, user request messages conveying a [requirements specification] specification of user requirements relating to [of] a predetermined [type] category of requirements [and wherein said one or more brokers is arranged to forward to said second user access means received messages conveying a requirements specification of said predetermined type].

11. (Twice Amended) A system according to claim 7, wherein each said requirements specification is defined according to a predetermined requirements representation scheme.

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12. (Amended) A requirements matching system, having at least one requirements matching [broker] server arranged with access to a communications network, wherein said at least one requirements matching [broker] server includes:

an input for receiving a user request message by means of said communications network, wherein a user request message [includes] comprises a specification of user requirements and an identifier for [the sender] a response contact; [of the request message and a specification of user requirements;] and

routing means for forwarding a received specification of user [request] requirements [message] to a destination determined by said routing means and accessible by means of said communications network, wherein said routing means comprise:

a store for storing at least one routing rule for controlling said routing means, wherein a routing rule comprises a specification of requirements to be routed [supplier deliverables] and an identifier for a corresponding destination;

comparison means for comparing a specification of user requirements [contained in] conveyed by a received user request message with a specification of requirements to be routed as defined [supplier deliverables contained] in a stored routing rule and, in dependence upon the result of said comparison, identifying a corresponding destination for the forwarding of said [user request message] specification of user requirements; and

forwarding means for transmitting, by means of said communications network, a [received user request] message conveying a specification of user requirements to a destination identified by said comparison means.

14. (Twice Amended) An electronic [tendering] trading system, including at least one requirements matching [broker] server according to claim 1.

16. (Amended) A method of routing a [request message conveying a] specification of user requirements from a user to a potential supplier, the method comprising [the steps of]:

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receiving a request message conveying [a] said specification of user requirements;
comparing [the] said specification of requirements conveyed by said received request message with a specification of supplier deliverables [included] defined in each rule of a set of at least one routing rule [for routing request messages], wherein a routing rule comprises [each of said rules for routing request messages including] a specification of supplier deliverables and an identifier for a corresponding forwarding destination;
in dependence upon the result of said comparison, identifying a forwarding destination corresponding [with] to [the] said specification of user requirements [conveyed by said received request message]; and
transmitting a message including said specification of user requirements to said identified forwarding destination.

17. (Amended) A method according to claim 16, including [the step of, on receipt of the request message conveying the specification of user requirements,] extracting one or more predetermined types of information from [the] said received request message and storing the extracted information.

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18. (Twice Amended) A method [according to] as in claim 16, wherein each said specification of user requirements and of supplier deliverables is defined according to the same predetermined representation scheme.

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19. (Amended) A method of [matching] routing a buyer's requirements for goods or services [with] to a potential supplier of said goods or services in an electronic [tendering] trading system, comprising [the steps of]:

- (i) storing [one or more] at least one routing rules, each routing rule comprising, for a given supplier, a specification of goods or services [available from] defined by said supplier and an address for said supplier, each said specification being defined according to a predetermined representation scheme;
- (ii) [defining] receiving a specification of goods or services required by said buyer, defined using the same said predetermined representation scheme as in (i);
- (iii) comparing the buyer specification from [step] (ii) with a supplier specification [contained] defined in [one of] said at least one [or more] routing rule[s];
- (iv) identifying a supplier address in dependence upon said comparison;

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(v) forwarding [said] the buyer specification to the supplier address identified at [step] (iv).

Add new claims 20-23:

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--20. A requirements matching system according to claim 7, wherein servers of the system are arranged to forward specifications of user requirements describing a particular category of requirements, conveyed by received user request messages to a predetermined respective server of the system.

21. An electronic trading system according to claim 15, wherein servers of the system are arranged to forward specifications of user requirements describing a particular category of requirements, conveyed by received user request messages, to a predetermined respective server of the system.

22. An electronic purchasing apparatus for use with a requirements matching system comprising a plurality of requirements matching servers, wherein each server of the requirements matching system includes an interface to a communications network to enable communication with other servers of the system, and wherein each server includes routing means for forwarding a specification of user requirements conveyed by a received user request message to a predetermined destination selected by the routing means according to the category of requirements described in said specification, said category being one of a predefined set of categories, the apparatus comprising:

a communications network interface to enable communication with at least one requirements matching server of said requirements matching system;

a user interface for receiving a specification of user requirements; and

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a message generator for generating a user request message comprising a received specification of user requirements and an identifier for a response contact, and for transmitting the generated user request message to a server of said requirements matching system.

23. An electronic trading system including a plurality of requirements matching servers, wherein each server includes an interface to a communications network to enable communication with other servers of the system, and wherein each server includes routing means for forwarding a specification of user requirements conveyed by a received user request message to a predetermined destination selected by the routing means according to the category of requirements described in said specification, said category being one of a predefined set of categories.--
